



In the last Doodle I asked you if you had dreams and I suppose that almost all of you would have answered, "Yes"; now I am asking you if you have had visions. I have found that many people have had a vision but not recognised that is what they have experienced, so I want to try and explain the differences between a dream and a vision.

God can most certainly speak to us through a dream, but often dreams are caused by a variety of things to do with the body and mind such as natural bodily function, stress, upset, excitement about a holiday or coming event, something that you have eaten that does not agree with your individual digestive system, (Often accompanied by tummy rumblings!) need to go to the toilet, medication too high or does not suit. Visions are to do with the spirit and are God-given. They are given for a specific purpose and are usually either for comfort or to give a particular direction to a person's life.



Dreams are often given as a series of pictures that can seem to last up to a couple of hours, but, in reality may only take a few minutes of sleep time. Speech and smells can also be included. A vision is more like a photograph and captures one particular instant; not always accompanied by speech.



Visions most commonly occur at a time when we have just woken up so I think that is why folk often think that it is a dream that they have had. The first few minutes after waking, before we have got round to opening our eyes or thinking about the day's events, seems to be a time when we are most receptive to what God wants to say to us. These, of course, are generalisations from my own experience and from what others have told me and your own experience may differ from these.

On speaking to others I have found that it is quite common for God to give comfort in the form of a vision at a time of bereavement. These are given to those who have not made a Christian commitment as well as to Christians. At a time when people are particularly thinking about the whereabouts of their loved one who has died, God gives them an assurance that that person is OK. Some see a picture of their loved one in a beautiful garden – not just an ordinary garden but an absolutely stunning one.



Others see a vision of the face of their loved one. The face is extremely happy and assures the person that their loved one is in Heaven.

None of us are able to say that a person will not be going to Heaven no matter what sort of life they have lived or what they have done as we do not know what commitment they have made during those last few minutes of their lives. My Mam died a few years ago and even though she was a brilliant mother, as far as I know she had never expressed that she had become a Christian. One day I was given a vision of her face and she looked so happy – her face was beaming – and I felt that God was giving me the assurance that she was OK. It is amazing how God can speak to us and show us things!

Another time when folk have a vision is when God is specifically giving them guidance about their future or at a time when God is drastically changing their lives. Over thirty years ago God gave me a vision of Jesus on the cross. It was so real and was as if I was actually standing there personally. On looking back I would say

that it was the one thing that has most affected me and the result was that I left my secular job to work full-time in the church. Dreams are often forgotten after a few hours or days but visions stay in our minds, even though they may have lasted for only a few seconds. Even now, after all this time, I can still find it upsetting to sing hymns about the cross or to take communion. In the light of the cross everything else pales into insignificance and it becomes the driving force for the desire to tell others about Jesus and what he has done for each one of us.



In some of the visions we read about in the Bible, there is often speech as well as pictures. Paul was travelling from one place to another preaching and he had a vision of a man asking him to go to Macedonia. Paul changed his plans because he recognised that God was guiding him there at that time. (Acts 16)

The centurion Cornelius was in Caesarea and had a vision of an angel. (Acts 10) The angel told him to send for Peter and to listen to what he had to say. He was even told the house in which Peter was staying in



Joppa. The next day God also gave Peter a vision and whilst he was puzzling over the meaning of it, he was told that some men were looking for him and that he was to go with them. What amazes me is that Cornelius was in Caesarea and Peter in Joppa about forty miles away! We say with our lips that God can do anything, but, when we hear of something like this happening we can still find it hard to grasp God's capabilities! The result of those visions was that Peter went to Cornelius, who had gathered together his family and friends, told them all about Jesus and they all became Christians, received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and were baptised in water.

God is able to work in so many different ways. Visions are very simple yet very powerful and God uses them in order to bring people into a closer relationship with Himself.

When John was exiled to the island of Patmos, God gave him a whole string of visions and he was instructed to write down what he saw and heard spoken. These are written in the book of Revelation at the end of our Bibles and here are some of the words that John heard sung.



*'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'* (Rev. 4)

*'Worthy art Thou, Our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for Thou didst create all things.'* (Rev. 4)

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and might and honour and glory and blessing.'* (Rev. 5)

